

## Homeless in Bethesda CFC Story of the Week -- Week 4

The Bethesda boom transformed acres, as developers courted the cashmere crowd with new offices, condos and shops that boasted success with buffed marble, brass and mahogany. But not everyone benefited. The guy on Woodmont Avenue wearing a smooth leather jacket and carrying a neat black gym bag isn't on his way to a morning work out. He carries the remnants of a life vexed by an unspoken crisis as he walks to one of the few places in town where he is welcome: an office hidden in a parking garage that houses [Bethesda CARES](#), a CFC charity which helps the homeless.



Bethesda CARES provides meals to the homeless.

When the doors open at 9:00 a.m., he goes to the cold coffee maker. A staff member calls out to her colleagues: "We're running out of coffee filters!" The client finds one of the few left and pours coffee into it, but no one sighs because the shortage is symbolic. Coffee has been dribbling out of the maker faster than contributions have come in. "Donations dried up this summer," said Susan Kirk, Executive Director of [Bethesda CARES](#). "It has been worse than usual."

[Bethesda CARES](#) tries to meet the immediate needs of the homeless with meals, clothing, showers and medical care. It also provides counseling, referrals and job-search assistance. If new funds come, Kirk hopes to resume an eviction prevention program, which helps people who get behind in paying rent or utility bills so they don't become homeless in the first place.

It's shocking how fast some can fall. Oscar worked hard to make it here since emigrating from El Salvador 14 years ago. He finally had a steady job at a local Giant Food store cleaning floors. He earned enough to pay half the rent on an apartment and send money to a son in El Salvador and a son in New York. But then his roommate abruptly left. Unable to cover the rent by himself, Oscar soon lost everything -- his apartment, possessions and job. As Oscar's life spiraled, he drank to fight depression. But he only descended further into a cycle of addiction and despair.

### Bethesda CARES and NIH Help



Oscar is now back on his feet thanks to Bethesda CARES and NIH.

Fortunately, [Bethesda CARES](#) and NIH were there for him. The Bethesda CARES social worker told him about the NIH Clinical Center. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) was recruiting patients for studies to understand the effects of alcoholism. If he participated in the research, Oscar would receive a 4-week, state-of-the-art, residential treatment program. He didn't think it would work for him, but he didn't have much to lose, so he went to the Clinical Center. After 2 weeks, he began to feel he could control the addiction that had possessed his body. Soon he was convinced

he could "feel OK without having to drink." After he successfully completed the program, [Bethesda CARES](#) helped him get a job at a local hotel. Now that he's sober and working again, he can't say thank you enough for how NIH and [Bethesda CARES](#) helped him. "People were really good to me," he said in Spanish. "They made me feel like I was home."

**We rarely see it, but our work at NIH and our CFC contributions really change lives. We should feel as good as Oscar does about what we do for the community. No matter what charity you contribute to, you can be proud of making a difference to people you care about.**



Susan Kirk (r) picks up sandwiches leftover from the CFC Kickoff and donated to Bethesda CARES by CSR staff: Pam Sullivan, Tanjanika Fishburne, and Mac Hadley

**Getting Involved:** [Bethesda CARES](#) gladly accepts donations of food leftover from NIH meetings. It also welcomes donations of coffee, tea and other "hospitality" items (including coffee filters!), as well as clothing and toiletries. Contact Bethesda CARES at 301 907-9244 or visit its Web site (<http://www.bethesdacares.com>) for more information on how you can help.

**NIAAA Trials:** If you know someone struggling with alcoholism, you may suggest that he/she consider participating in an NIAAA study at the Clinical Center or at one of many sites around the country. Information on NIAAA trials is available from its Clinical Trials Web page: <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/clinicaltrials/clinical.htm>

### **About the CFC Stories of the Week**

Each week of the campaign, we will share a story that shows you how your CFC contribution can touch the lives of people you care about. We will mention a few charities along the way, but there are 3,000 charities in the CFC Catalog of Caring. Over 130 of them -- such as the [Interfaith Housing Coalition](#) -- are struggling like [Bethesda CARES](#) to help the homeless in our area. More than one CFC charity can help you make a difference to the people and causes you believe in. **[We encourage you to consider all the possibilities.](#)**

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